May 2015

Now What?

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Abstract

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Keywords

curation, adjunct faculty, expansion, service, promotion

Author Bio & Acknowledgements

Marian Lambers has a BFA in Fine Arts from Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan and an MA in Art History from Wayne State University, Detroit. She has served as the Slide Librarian and Visual Resources Curator at the College for Creative Studies since 1997. In addition, she has been an adjunct professor of Art History for twenty years. Earlier work experience includes museum practices, working in the printing industry, graphic design and teaching in a remote secondary school in Adikpo, Nigeria.

Perspective

Now What?

Marian Lambers
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Abstract

Using her experiences at the College for Creative Studies, Marian Lambers challenges visual resources professionals to acknowledge the habits of a new generation of image users, promote department services, aggressively curate, and expand their roles in the educational communities they serve.

Author Bio

Marian Lambers has a BFA in Fine Arts from Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan and an MA in Art History from Wayne State University, Detroit. She has served as the Slide Librarian and Visual Resources Curator at the College for Creative Studies since 1997. In addition, she has been an adjunct professor of Art History for twenty years. Earlier work experience includes museum practices, working in the printing industry, graphic design and teaching in a remote secondary school in Adikpo, Nigeria.

Most of my fellow visual resources professionals spent the first ten years of the twenty-first century scrambling. We digitized, color corrected, and catalogued at a maddening pace, plunged into the depths of digital asset management, juggled the task of managing slide and digital collections side by side, and squeezed in hours of hand holding as many of our faculty struggled with the steady march of technology. Now halfway into the second decade, many of us would love to take a deep breath and go back to pleasantly engaging with research minded tenured faculty. Instead we face the swelling ranks of adjuncts who do not have time to make specific requests, who hastily grab sub par images from the Internet and use document projectors in the classroom.

At the College for Creative Studies (CCS), an art school with approximately 1400 students, the Visual Resources Department is tackling these challenges in a very deliberate manner. We aggressively promote our services, have expanded local collection options and metadata, and have partnered with other CCS departments and area institutions. As a result, our digital collections currently have approximately 500 active users in any given semester and contain over 1900 media groups. I would like to share the process we have utilized up to this point and add to the conversation of how visual resources professionals can embrace change.

Accept

While accepting the inevitable seems ridiculously obvious (*get over it, move on!*), remember the rants of extremely intelligent academics when their beloved slides were whisked off to storage. Digging in one's heels, standing ground - it's human. We all do it. Visual resources professionals resist moving forward by not acknowledging and accommodating the habits of the new generation of faculty and students. CCS Visual Resources is anchored in the library, so how research, image retrieval, and class preparation is being done is plain to see right outside my door. Faculty and students alike turn to the Internet for absolutely everything. It's fast. Time is important. And, let's not forget that the adjunct who races around to multiple schools or holds a day job somewhere else is saving our schools a bundle. They will multiply because money matters.

Listen

So, what next? First we need to find out what these harried gypsy instructors (I am one too) want. But, this is hard. How can we listen when they do not have the time to fill out image request forms, much less dilly-dally and chitchat? At CCS, after spending a few weeks nailing down the right questions and keeping it relatively short, we sent out a survey (see Appendix). In order to counter the faculty's proclivity to delete yet one more time sucking questionnaire, we had our very popular and respected Academic Dean introduce and promote it. This tactic netted a bit more participation, but I admit the response rate was indeed low. Yet we worked with what we had, analyzed the data every which way and ended up making some pretty accurate inferences. After a year of hard work, I explained the changes we made to our database software and the expansion of our content at our monthly Faculty Assembly. I hammered on the point that our goal is to provide what they need, make their searches easy and their classroom presentations exceptional. Helpful questions and comments followed. You are probably

wondering what else this survey told us? Well, to put it civilly, it revealed a lack of awareness of what we do. This brings me to the next phase in the process.

Promote

Shout it from the rooftops! We all know why our images are superior to a Google search result and have even devised a variety of ways to prove it. However, where, how, and when we promote our services is what drives the point home. I cut the new faculty hires off at the pass by beating my drum at New Faculty Orientation every semester. Flyers go in every faculty mailbox; promotional material is placed on campus screens and on Blackboard. Our Academic Technology department advertises and co-conducts our monthly workshops, and we have a noon-hour session every week that meets in the Visual Resources office called "Luna Tips and Tricks." All of our users get monthly email updates that showcase the latest image additions, which are more direct and personal than keeping up a Facebook page or blog. A colleague at a neighboring institution sponsors a lovely "Tea at Three with the VRC." Sometimes it feels like all this cheerleading is in front of an inattentive crowd, but our presence at CCS is definitely coming out of the fog.

Curate

In addition to offering high quality images and metadata, there are other ways to entice faculty and students into exploring and using an image database. Visual Resource Curators are renowned for uncovering the obscure and enriching scholarship as eloquently stated in the 2009 VRA "White Paper Advocating for Visual Resources Management" (http://vraweb.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/vra_white_paper.pdf):

> … teaching and research continually require additional images. As with other information formats, new areas of knowledge and inquiry create fresh needs. Teachers, students and museum curators constantly invent urgent new uses for pictures. Local production of image assets has always been an effective response to dynamic requirements and should continue to be a significant part of the increasingly complex array of image sources. (3)

Because time is especially precious to the adjunct, go out on a limb and anticipate their needs. I used to be more cantankerous "*I'm not a mind reader*," I'd whine. However, collection building does necessitate a bit of sleuthing – enquire about textbooks, peruse the bookstore lists and sniff out course syllabi. Assertive curating provides a convenient excuse to browse through the latest periodicals and books. Then set to work. Fill in those collection gaps, gather, and organize. Large image services cannot carefully select, improvise, accommodate, pinpoint or offer personalized service with a smile. Our Luna database software (http://www.lunaimaging.com/#welcome) includes the option to assemble public media groups, or image sets. These curated mini-collections often geared to required courses are gifts that can be offered to those hard-pressed for time and technologically challenged. I even take it a step further when I find the time, and put together quirky groups (my last one was called "The Grotesque") and shoot off an email with a link to potentially interested parties. This encourages collection browsing which is a very good thing.
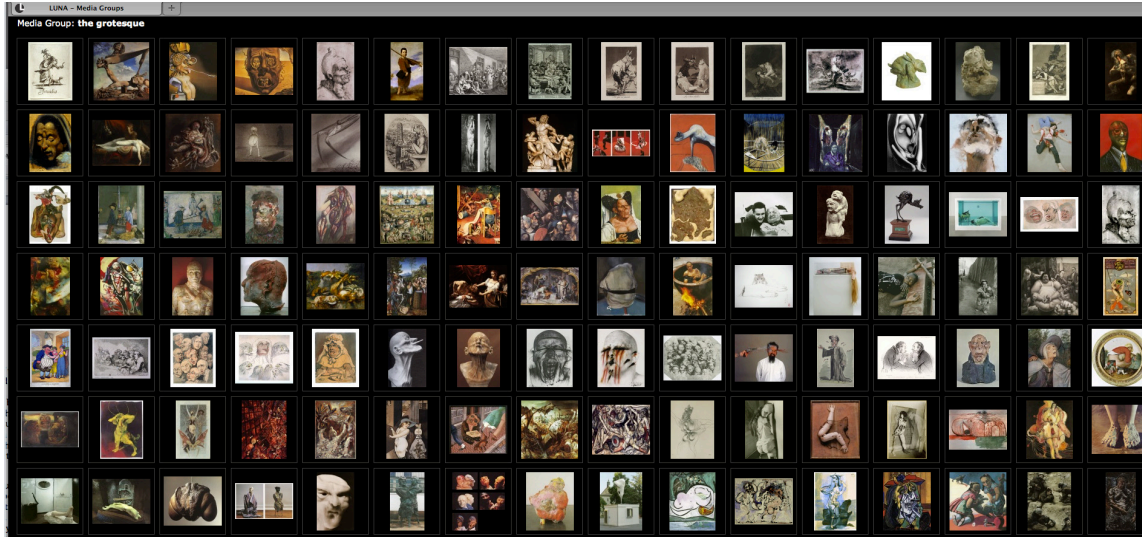
Figure 1: A small portion of the 334 images from the media group titled The Grotesque.

Expand

The die-hard Google habit persists with faculty and students despite poor image quality and metadata issues because information is so abundant and easy to find on the Internet. How do we deal with that? We compete by offering in-depth information and collections specific to our institutions. So dive into that metadata and add the search terms that apply to foundation courses, drawing, painting, sculpture, graphic design, photography, etc. Use words like perspective, shadow, contour, value, painterly, gestural, intaglio, etching, still life, portraiture, figurative, etc. Keep track of what makes sense; grow a list. In a survey, ask those professors how they typically search. A feature in our CCS metadata that students find helpful is the specific book titles and call numbers (for us this information is most likely found in the source field), which allow them to go from what they refer to as "Luna" directly to the library bookshelves.

The most obvious way to expand is to add large image collections. For some, this means sitting back and allowing digital libraries like Artstor (http://www.artstor.org/) to do the work. But institutions need to subsidize the pre-packaged and showcase what makes their stomping grounds unique, for example, the community, special research, and unconventional courses. We have a popular "Out and About" project that involves photographing everything from Detroit graffiti and public sculpture, to neighborhood revitalization and cultural events. I work every summer partnering with department chairs to update our Student Work Collection, which is heavily used in marketing campaigns. Other possibilities for visual resources expansion include managing the digitization of archival institutional photographs and registering the campus permanent art collection. Last year CCS Visual Resources added an intern and partnered with Wayne State University and the Detroit Institute of Arts. This year, efforts are being made to partner with other area art museums as well.
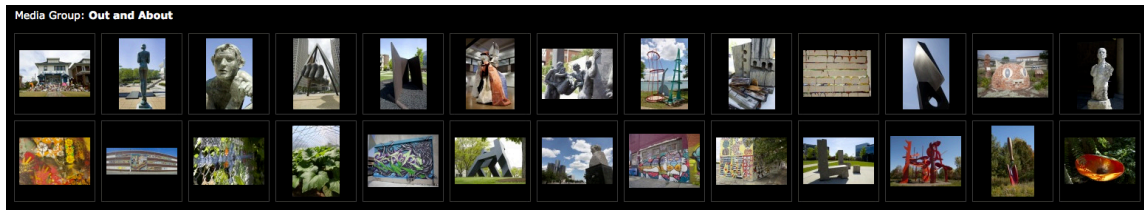
Figure 2: Selections from Out and About project. Photography by Vanessa Miller and Marian Lambers.

Figure 3: CCS Student Work Collection header.

Serve

Our knowledge as visual resources professionals is specialized and we shouldn't shy away from taking initiative. After all, how large is that pool of experts on campus who can explain why embedding images is so critical, wax eloquent about basic copyright law, expound on the importance of thought-out cataloguing structures or intimately understand the features of our software? We have the ability to calm the frenzied, rescue the confused, and delight the procrastinator. No doubt we will continue to scramble, plunge, and juggle as our profession transforms, but we should never lose sight of why we do what we do. Jean-Baptiste Alphonse Karr stated "The more things change, the more they are the same." Our challenge remains to stay ahead of the curve, adjust, and serve.

Appendix

College for Creative Studies 2013 Luna Users Survey

Note: comments have been left out of this document in order to protect the participant's identities and save space. Survey administration: Laurie Evans and Vanessa Miller.

College for Creative Studies
CCS Luna Users Survey April 2013

1 - Please identify who you are

Response Option	Weight	Frequency	Percentage	Percent Responses	Mean
Full Time Faculty	(1)	19	24.36%		
Adjunct Faculty	(2)	39	50%		
Staff	(3)	16	20.51%		
Staff and Faculty	(4)	4	5.13%		

Return Rateq			
78/267 (29.21%)			

2 - What department do you primarily associate yourself with?

Response Option	Weight	Frequency	Percentage	Percent Responses	Mean
Staff/Administrative	(1)	13	16.67%		
Advertising	(2)	4	5.13%		
Art Education	(3)	2	2.56%		
Crafts	(4)	5	6.41%		
Entertainment Arts	(5)	4	5.13%		
Fine Arts	(6)	2	2.56%		
Foundations	(7)	8	10.26%		
Graphic Design	(8)	4	5.13%		
MFA	(9)	1	1.28%		
Illustration	(10)	2	2.56%		
Interior Design	(11)	2	2.56%		
Liberal Arts	(12)	13	16.67%		
Photography	(13)	5	6.41%		
Product Design	(14)	5	6.41%		
Transportation Design	(15)	8	10.26%		

Return Rateq			
78/267 (29.21%)			

3 - Do you use Luna?

Response Option	Weight	Frequency	Percentage	Percent Responses	Mean
Yes	(1)	18	23.08%		1.77
No	(2)	60	76.92%		Question

Return Rateq	Mean	STD
78/267 (29.21%)	1.77	0.42

4 - If you answered No in the previous question, why not?

Response Option	Weight	Frequency	Percentage	Percent Responses	Mean
I did not know it existed	(1)	15	25.42%		
I'm too busy to acquaint myself with it	(2)	6	10.17%		
I use a different image resource	(3)	10	16.95%		
I scan my own images	(4)	5	8.47%		
I avoid using images when I teach	(5)	1	1.69%		
It is too hard to use	(6)	0	0%		
It doesn't have what I need	(7)	2	3.39%		
I can't download images	(8)	0	0%		
Other, please comment	(9)	20	33.9%		

Return Rateq			
59/267 (22.1%)			

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College for Creative Studies
CCS Luna Users Survey April 2013

5 - If you answered Yes, how frequently do you use Luna?					
Response Option	Weight	Frequency	Percentage	Percent Responses	Mean
Every class	(1)	5	29.41%		1.94
Once a month	(2)	8	47.06%		
Once a semester	(3)	4	23.53%		
				0 25 50 75 100	Question
Return Rateq	Mean	STD			
17/267 (6.37%)	1.94	0.75			

6 - From where do you most often access Luna?					
Response Option	Weight	Frequency	Percentage	Percent Responses	Mean
From home	(1)	5	10.87%		
From CCS	(2)	17	36.96%		
Other, please explain below	(3)	0	0%		
N/A	(0)	24	52.17%		
				0 25 50 75 100	
Return Rateq					
46/267 (17.23%)					

7 - How do you most often use Luna?					
Response Option	Weight	Frequency	Percentage	Percent Responses	Mean
Classroom presentations	(1)	16	34.04%		
Student review media groups and flashcards	(2)	0	0%		
Research	(3)	2	4.26%		
Browse it for fresh ideas	(4)	2	4.26%		
Other, please comment below	(5)	1	2.13%		
N/A	(0)	26	55.32%		
				0 25 50 75 100	
Return Rateq					
47/267 (17.6%)					

8 - Which of the following applications do you prefer to use for displaying classroom images?					
Response Option	Weight	Frequency	Percentage	Percent Responses	Mean
Luna	(1)	8	10.26%		2.76
PowerPoint	(2)	35	44.87%		
Prezi	(3)	3	3.85%		
Other, please explain below	(4)	32	41.03%		
				0 25 50 75 100	Question
Return Rateq	Mean	STD			
78/267 (29.21%)	2.76	1.11			

9 - Are you aware that you can create different kinds of slide shows through your media groups?					
Response Option	Weight	Frequency	Percentage	Percent Responses	Mean
Yes	(1)	27	41.54%		1.58
No	(2)	38	58.46%		
				0 25 50 75 100	Question
Return Rateq	Mean	STD			
65/267 (24.34%)	1.58	0.50			

10 - Do you use either the slide show or the presentation function in Luna?					
Response Option	Weight	Frequency	Percentage	Percent Responses	Mean
Yes, slideshow	(1)	9	15.25%		
Yes, presentation	(2)	0	0%		3.49
Yes, both	(3)	3	5.08%		
No, neither	(4)	47	79.66%		
				0 25 50 75 100	Question
Return Rateq	Mean	STD			
59/267 (22.1%)	3.49	1.09			

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College for Creative Studies
CCS Luna Users Survey April 2013

11 - What is your primary image search method online or in Luna?

Response Option	Weight	Frequency	Percentage	Percent Responses	Mean
By creator (artist)	(1)	10	12.82%		4.24
By subject (still-life, portrait, etc.)	(2)	8	10.26%		
By type (painting, performance art, installation art, collage, etc.)	(3)	2	2.56%		
By keyword	(4)	13	16.67%		
It varies	(5)	27	34.62%		
I do not search for images	(6)	14	17.95%		
Other, please comment	(7)	4	5.13%		

Return Rateq	Mean	STD	
78/267 (29.21%)	4.24	1.76	

12 - I find what I need in Luna:

Response Option	Weight	Frequency	Percentage	Percent Responses	Mean
Always	(1)	1	1.75%		2.50
Most of the time	(2)	10	17.54%		
Sometimes	(3)	10	17.54%		
Never	(4)	1	1.75%		
N/A	(0)	35	61.4%		

Return Rateq	Mean	STD	
57/267 (21.35%)	2.5	0.67	

13 - Do you find the monthly New Images emails to be helpful?

Response Option	Weight	Frequency	Percentage	Percent Responses	Mean
Yes, this works for me	(1)	20	40.82%		1.94
No, I never open the email	(2)	13	26.53%		
I don't receive them and would like more information	(3)	15	30.61%		
I would prefer a different form of communication. Please comment.	(4)	1	2.04%		

Return Rateq	Mean	STD	
49/267 (18.35%)	1.94	0.90	

14 - On a scale of 1-10, how easy are media groups to use? (1 being the easiest)

Response Option	Weight	Frequency	Percentage	Percent Responses	Mean
1	(1)	4	18.18%		4.64
2	(2)	2	9.09%		
3	(3)	2	9.09%		
4	(4)	2	9.09%		
5	(5)	3	13.64%		
6	(6)	3	13.64%		
7	(7)	3	13.64%		
8	(8)	1	4.55%		
9	(9)	2	9.09%		

Return Rateq	Mean	STD	
22/267 (8.24%)	4.64	2.63	

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College for Creative Studies
CCS Luna Users Survey April 2013

15 - How complete and useful do you find the metadata included with the images?

Response Option	Weight	Frequency	Percentage	Percent Responses	Mean
Very useful	(1)	13	52%		
Sometimes useful	(2)	11	44%		1.52
Not useful	(3)	1	4%		

Return Rateq	Mean	STD	
25/267 (9.36%)	1.52	0.59	

16 - Are you aware that you need to complete training in order to receive access to high-resolution images?

Response Option	Weight	Frequency	Percentage	Percent Responses	Mean
Yes	(1)	26	46.43%		1.54
No	(2)	30	53.57%		

Return Rateq	Mean	STD	
56/267 (20.97%)	1.54	0.50	

17 - Do you add external media and/or use a Flickr account with Luna?

Response Option	Weight	Frequency	Percentage	Percent Responses	Mean
Yes	(1)	8	18.6%		1.81
No	(2)	35	81.4%		

Return Rateq	Mean	STD	
43/267 (16.1%)	1.81	0.39	

18 - If you do not use external media with Luna, why not?

Response Option	Weight	Frequency	Percentage	Percent Responses	Mean
I did not know that I could	(1)	16	50%		
No need	(2)	7	21.88%		
Too difficult	(3)	3	9.38%		2.16
Cannot find the correct images	(4)	0	0%		
Not interested	(5)	6	18.75%		

Return Rateq	Mean	STD	
32/267 (11.99%)	2.16	1.53	

19 - If you have used the functions for external media, please rate your experience them on scale of 1-10 (1 being very good)

Response Option	Weight	Frequency	Percentage	Percent Responses	Mean
2	(2)	1	14.29%		
3	(3)	2	28.57%		5.57
5	(5)	1	14.29%		
8	(8)	1	14.29%		
9	(9)	2	28.57%		

Return Rateq	Mean	STD	
7/267 (2.62%)	5.57	3.05	

20 - Do you use the Luna Workspace function?

Response Option	Weight	Frequency	Percentage	Percent Responses	Mean
Yes	(1)	6	13.04%		1.87
No	(2)	40	86.96%		

Return Rateq	Mean	STD	
46/267 (17.23%)	1.87	0.34	

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21 - If yes, for what purpose do you use Workspace?

Response Option	Weight	Frequency	Percentage	Percent Responses	Mean
Organizing images	(1)	4	66.67%		
Viewing images	(2)	1	16.67%		1.50
Detail view	(3)	1	16.67%		
Other, please comment	(4)	0	0%		
				0 25 50 75 100	Question

Return Rateq	Mean	STD	
6/267 (2.25%)	1.5	0.84	

22 - If you do not use Workspace or are unaware of this function, would you like to learn more about it?

Response Option	Weight	Frequency	Percentage	Percent Responses	Mean
Yes	(1)	25	69.44%		1.31
No	(2)	11	30.56%		
				0 25 50 75 100	Question

Return Rateq	Mean	STD	
36/267 (13.48%)	1.31	0.47	

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